

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01     DACCA 05509 271003Z

22

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 /063 W

----- 098281

R 270215Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2490

INFO AMCONGEN CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABADHWEPOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 5509

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BG

SUBJ: ELECTIONS? IF SO: HOW, WHEN, FOR WHAT AND ON WHAT

REF: DACCA 5326

SUMMARY: PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS PROPOSED FOR FEBRUARY CONTINUE APACE. FIFTEEN PARTIES NOW APPROVED INCLUDE ALL BUT ONE OF MAJOR GROUPINGS AND PARTIES ARE HOLDING MEETINGS, EVEN IF ONLY PREACHING TO CONVERTED. NOTABLE ABSENTEE FROM APPROVED LIST IS AWAMI LEAGUE, WHICH APPEARS BESET WITH INTERNAL FACTIONALISM. NONE-THELESS, ELECTION FEVER SEEMS NOT HAVE CAUGHT ON WITH POPULATION AT LARGE. THERE ARE NO BIG ISSUES, NO TAKE-CHARGE LEADER, AND, IT APPEARS, GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THINGS AS THEY ARE. ZIA'S OWN PLANS ARE UNKNOWN, ALTHOUGH HIS POSSIBLE EARLY ASSUMPTION OF PRESIDENCY IS AMONG CURRENT RUMORS. ANOTHER RUMOR STATES THAT BDG MAY HOLD ELECTIONS FOR UNION COUNCILS PRIOR TO (OR INSTEAD OF?) PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. VARIATIONS ON ELECTION SCENARIO, OR LACK OF ONE, REACH TO REALM OF HIGH MATHEMATICS. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02     DACCA 05509 271003Z

1. IF ONE WERE TO JUDGE ELECTION ENTHUSIASM BY COUNT OF

CYCLE RICKSHAWS OUTSIDE RESIDENCES OF POLITICIANS IN DHANMODI DURING PAST WEEKEND, IT WOULD SEEM THAT, EVEN WITH RESTRICTIONS LIMITING MEETINGS TO "INDOOR", FEVER IS PRESENT AND BEGINNING TO SPREAD. HOWEVER, IF JUDGEMENT IS MADE RATHER ON CONVERSATIONS WITH BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN POLITICS AND ON REPORTS FILTERING INTO DACCA FROM FOREIGN AND BANGLADESHI TRAVELLERS OUTSIDE DACCA, IT APPEARS THAT THERE IS MUCH APATHY AND CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION TO UPSETTING RELATIVELY GOOD STATE OF AFFAIRS EXISTING NOW UNDER MARTIAL LAW REGIME. COMPARE TO MUJIB DAYS, BELLIES ARE FULL, BODIES ARE CLOTHED, LAW AND ORDER IS IMPROVED, ECONOMIC INDICATORS POINT UPWARD HOWEVER TENTATIVELY. THUS TO MANY, POLITICS IN USUAL BENGALI FASHION ARE SEEN AS HARBINGER OF OLD PROBLEMS AND NOW AS MOBILIZATION FOR FURTHER STEPS FORWARD.

2. HOWEVER, BDG IS MOVING AHEAD WITH THE PREPARATIONS NECESSARY BEFORE AN ELECTION CAN BE HELD, SPECIFICALLY WITH THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS AND DESIGNATION OF RETURNING OFFICERS. GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO APPROVED 15 PARTIES AND IS RECONSIDERING APPLICATIONS OF SEVERAL MORE AMONG THE FIFTY ODD GROUPS WHICH HAVE MADE APPLICATION. BDG ALSO HAS, BY AMENDMENT TO REGULATION MADE ITS DECISIONS ON APPROVAL OF PARTIES FINAL AND NOT APPEALABLE TO COURTS. ALL OF THE OLD PARTIES AND SEVERAL NEW ONES WHICH ARE SPLINTERS FROM OLD PARTIES OR CONGLOMERATIONS OF FORMER PARTIES HAVE BEEN APPROVED WITH THE MAJOR EXCEPTION OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE. ITS FIRST APPLICATION WAS TURNED DOWN, WE UNDERSTAND, AS ITS OPEN COMPLIMENTARY REFERENCES TO BANGABANDU SHEIKH MUJIB VIOLATED THE INJUNCTION CONTAINED IN THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE PARTIES REGULATION THAT IT NOT "GENERATE OR FOSTER ANY PERSONALITY CULT AROUND ANY PERSON, LIVING OR DEAD". WHEN APPLICATION WAS RETURNED FOR CHANGES, THOS OPENED ANEW DEBATE WITHIN THE AWAMI LEAGUE BETWEEN THOSE WHO FAVOR WHAT LOOSELY CAN BE DESCRIBED AS MORE STATE OWNERSHIP OF ECONOMY AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE SUCH CONTROL, I.E., RESUMING DEBATE WHICH EXISTED IN PARTY EARLIER. NOW OUR INFORMATION HAS IT THAT THE PARTY MAY SPLIT INTO TWO OR EVEN THREE SEGMENTS. IN AN EFFORT TO

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03     DACCA 05509 271003Z

RESOLVE DIFFERENCES LEADERSHIP OF LEAGUE HAS BEEN IN ALMOST CONSTANT SESSION DURING LAST SEVERAL DAYS.

3. SPLIT IN AWAMI LEAGUE OR DENIAL OF CERTIFICATION BY GOVERNMENT, IF EITHER OCCURS, WOULD PERHAPS GIVE OPENING TO OTHER EX-AWAMI LEAGUERS TO WOO PARTY'S ORGANIZATION AND AND ITS SUPPORT. TWO ONE-TIME AWAMI LEAGUERS, ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN OF BANGLADESH JATIYO LEAGUE AND MUSHTAQUE

AHMAD TO BANGLADESH DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE, AS WELL AS GENERAL OSMANI OF JATIYO JANATA PARTY, ARE EACH LOOKING TOWARD SUCH AN EVENTUALITY AND ARE TAILORING THEIR SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS ALONG THESE LINES, E.G., OSMANI'S RECENT PRAISE OF MUJIB AS FOUNDER OF COUNTRY DESPITE HIS LATER FAILINGS.

4. NONETHELESS, ACTIVITY OF POLITICAINS HAS FAILED SO FAR TO OVERCOME THE APATHY OF MANY POTENTIAL VOTERS. TWO INGREDIENTS WHICH HAVE CHARACTERIZED BENGALI ELECTIONS SINCE 1937 ARE CLEARLY MISSING. THERE IS NO GREAT ISSUE, WHICH IN PAST HAS GENERALLY BEEN A NEGATIVE ONE OF OPPOSING REAL OR SUPPOSED EXPLOITER (HINDU LANDLORDS, HINDU RAJ, WEST PAKISTANIS). THERE IS ALSO NO GREAT LEADER TO SPEARHEAD DRIVE FOR AMELIORATION OF EXPLOITATION (FAZLUL HAQ, SUHRAWARDY, MUJIB). THERE ARE NO READILY IDENTIFIABLE "EXPLOITERS", EXCEPT POSSIBLY OF BENGALIS BY BENGALIS BUT THE FAR LEFT WHICH MIGHT USE THAT AS SLOGAN IS HEAVILY FACTIONALIZED AND APPEARS WEAK. AND CURRENT LEADERS ARE PYGMIES COMPARED TO THOSE OF THE PAST. ATTITUDE OF MANY THEREFORE IS THAT THINGS ARE GOING WELL; LET'S NOT DISTURB THE SITUATION BY USING ENERGIES ON POLITICKING.

5. RUMOR MILL ATTRIBUTES TO GENERAL ZIA DESIRE TO ASSUME PRESIDENCY PRIOR TO ELECTIONS AND, ACCORDING TO SOME, THIS STEP MAY BE TAKEN QUITE SOON. WE ARE NOT PRIVY TO ZIA'S MIND ON THIS AND DOUBT WHETHER THOSE PEDDLING RUMOR ARE EITHER, BUT SUCH A MOVE WOULD MAKE SENSE IF ZIA WISHES TO HAVE A MAJOR ROLE FOLLOWING ELECTIONS. THERE IS TALK OF A MODIFIED AYUB TYPE CONSTITUTION FOR BANGLADESH AFTER THE ELECTIONS WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MAJOR ROLE FOR PRESIDENT AND THIS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY REQUIRE PRESIDENT TO BE DRAWN FROM MILITARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04     DACCA 05509 271003Z

6. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL REPORTS, INCLUDING FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL AND ADVISERS, THAT UNION COUNCIL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD PRIOR TO PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. COUNCILLORS WERE LAST ELECTED IN DECEMBER, 1973, AND, WITH DEMISE OF CONSTITUTION IN 1975, THEIR TENURE OF OFFICE HAS LAPSED. GOVERNMENT COULD TEST ELECTION MACHINERY THROUGH SUCH ELECTIONS AND, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE BEEN TECHNICALLY NON-PARTIAN IN THE PAST, IT WOULD WITH RUDIMENTARY ANALYSIS GIVE FAIR INDICATION OF PARTY STRENGTH AND OF LOCAL ISSUES

WHICH ARE OF IMPORTANCE TO ELECTORATE. NO ONE, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, HAS SUGGESTED THAT COUNCILLORS WOULD BE USED AS ELECTORAL COLLEGE AS IN AYUB PERIOD, BUT THIS IS POSSIBILITY.

7. IN SUM, THERE IS ACTIVITY. THE POLITICIANS ARE TRYING TO DRUM UP ENTHUSIASM FOR ELECTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR OWN PLATFORMS. OTHER, SOMEWHAT MORE PRIVATELY, ARE MAKING THEIR OPPOSITION TO ELECTION KNOWN. THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES, OF HOLDING LOCAL ELECTIONS FIRST, OF HOLDING PARLIAMENHERY ELECTIONS, OR, POSSIBLY, OF SCRAPPING THE WHOLE PROGRAM. WHAT SCENARIO WILL EMERGE AND WITH WHAT PARTICIPANTS CANNOT BE JUDGED NOW, BUT TIME IS GROWING SHORT AND DECISIONS WILL APPARENTLY BE ANNOUNCED RATHER SOON.  
CHESLAW

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NATIONAL ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 27 OCT 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** saccheem  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976DACCA05509  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760400-1088  
**From:** DACCA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19761015/aaaaamgo.tel  
**Line Count:** 180  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 DACCA 5326  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** saccheem  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 14 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <14 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2004 by saccheem>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ELECTIONS? IF SO: HOW, WHEN, FOR WHAT AND ON WHAT  
**TAGS:** PINT, BG  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006